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ABSTRACT

Case studies of two laboratory shools, one operated by the University of Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania--Falk Elementary) and one by Keene State College (New Hampshire--Wheelock Elementary), revealed three categories of problems that have made the university/laboratory school alliance an unfulfilled one. The first set of problems relates to the lab schools' teacher education function. The two schools were unable to meet the observation and training requirements of their universities' education programs. Related concerns included the appropriateness of training teachers in a "rarefied" atmosphere. Organizational disjunctures among different departments and programs in the education schools comprised the second group of problems. The third cluster of problems arose due to the divergent professional priorities, reward structures, and modes of operation among researchers, education professors, and the laboratory school faculty. Findings confirm that, like other laboratory schools, the two schools studied have remained largely uninvolved in conducting or assessing research. Although evidence suggests that laboratory schools have been in decline for several decades, a genuine elementary school/education school alliance holds great potential if incorporated into a renewed teacher education program. Such a program was carried out for 7 years in Pittsburgh and involved the Falk laboratory school in a collaborative professional development school for simultaneous preservice and inservice training. (IAH)

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AN UNFULFILLED ALLIANCE

THE LAB SCHOOL IN TEACHER EDUCATION:

TWO CASE STUDIES

1910-1980

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A Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the History of Education Society, Atlanta, Ga., November 2, 1990.

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AN UNFULFILLED ALLIANCE

THE LAB SCHOOL IN TEACHER EDUCATION: TWO CASE STUDIES, 1910-1980

This paper grew out of a larger comparative historical study of the curricula for elementary teacher candidates at a regional/research university -- the University of Pittsburgh -- and a former normal school/teachers college -- Keene (N.H.) State College.[1] The study examined the content and goals of both general and professional course work, how the training and professional/research activities of the faculty influenced the curriculum, and the nature and structure of relationships between the colleges and their field training sites in elementary schools.[2] Both institutions maintained lab schools as small but significant components of their field training for at least fifty years, and both lab schools continue to function today.

This is a story of high ideals -- some of them significant and sound, others perhaps naive -- but also of lost opportunities and incomplete agendas in the relationship of Education program and lab school. In a brief set of concluding recommendations, it is also a call for the renewal of the lab school's role in teacher education.

In 1972, the Falk Elementary lab school of the School of Education, University of Pittsburgh, issued a document entitled "Unique Functions of a Campus Laboratory School."[3] The document's authors proclaimed twelve advantages to the university of operating such a school. Among its highlights were:

(1) The "feasibility of initiating programs completely

controlled by university personnel without drawbacks of administrative vetoes, faculty reluctance, (or) unreasonable parent protest";

(2) The "opportunity for the School of Education to initiate and demonstrate 'showcase' or 'pilot' programs and practices to convince public school teachers of their practica(lity);"

(3) The "willingness of (lab school) faculty to adapt schedules almost daily to accommodate teacher education professors and students";

(4) "Opportunities to cooperate in research (and clinical training') with other university departments" such as Medicine, Psychiatry, Child Development, and Speech; and

(5) The "opportunity to have university (Education) faculty applicants (as part of their interviews) "briefly demonstrate competence in teaching children."

Case study research into the histories of two campus lab schools -- the Falk (private, founded 1931), and the Wheelock (a public elementary school operated by Keene State College, established 1909)[5] -- raised for me a comparison between the twelve proclaimed advantages of these schools and the gifts reportedly given by one true love to another on the twelve days of Christmas. The promises were lofty, but the gifts fell short.

How and why did the University of Pittsburgh and Keene State College fail to attain the potential of alliances with their

campus lab schools? What lessons may be learned to enhance the ed school/lab school relationship in the next phase of teacher education reform? These are the questions addressed in this study.

Three categories of problems emerged in the study that have made the university/lab school alliance an unfulfilled one. I would like to identify the three general problem areas and then return to a more specific discussion of each.

The first set of problems arose from the lab schools' teacher education function. Most obvious was that neither lab school in this study, with their one or two classrooms per elementary grade, could come even close to meeting the observation and training requirements of education programs which graduated between 75 and 200 elementary candidates annually for most of their histories.[6] This situation spawned a number of related concerns, including questions about how appropriate it was in the first place to train teachers in the rarefied atmosphere of the lab school.

Organizational disjunctures among different departments and programs in the education schools comprised the second group of problems. The lab schools were expected to influence both pre-service teachers in training and, especially at Pittsburgh, to model exemplary teaching practices for in-service teachers and administrators in surrounding schools. But the degree programs in education at Pittsburgh and Keene, typical of others across the country,[7] evolved piecemeal. Rarely was there a central

plan for how diverse degree programs would address a common set of issues in schooling, or how the institution's own lab school could promote or enhance the ed school's objectives in its geographic region of influence. This, coupled with the lab school faculties' marginal official status with respect to the college faculty, left the lab school "outside the loop"" of substantive discussions about ed school program goals and methods.

A third cluster of problems arose due to the divergent professional priorities, reward structures, and modes of operation among researchers, education professors, and the lab school faculty. At Pittsburgh, the university's nationally-prominent Learning, Research and Development Center (L.R.D.C.), established in 1964, had difficulty in navigating its inter-faculty relationships, both with the School of Education and the Falk Lab School.[9] Furthermore, funded research in the longer-standing School of Education departments rarely dealt with instructional issues in elementary and secondary classrooms at all, despite a promise to the contrary in the School's 1960 report to the Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges,[10] as Pittsburgh obtained federal grants in such areas as vocational rehabilitation and international educational development.[11] Sporadic collaborations between Falk and the university's programs in psychology and medicine led to promising developments,[12] but did not characterize the lab school's operation over the long haul. At Keene State College, the

absence of any research tradition among the faculty until recent years clearly muted the potential for research at its Wheelock School.[13] Divergent professional identities and allegiances among these faculty groups also contributed to the murky and marginal status of the lab school teachers on the college campus.

I would now like to elaborate on some of the specific developments at Pittsburgh and Keene with respect to each of these three problem areas.

The Lab School and Its Teacher Education Function. Except for the years 1909-1919 at Keene,[14] and the years 1969-1976 at Pittsburgh,[15] college-supervised field placement schools including Wheelock and Falk never served more than a fraction of candidates for their teaching internship, although they strived to serve more candidates as sites for short-term visits and observations. Both periods in which the colleges operated a network of public-school "lab" sites began with high hopes and ideals, but became short-lived experiments in part because a neglected constituency, parents, decided to reclaim control over their children's schools from the colleges.[16]

Furthermore, few jobs for program graduates were available in either the southwestern New Hampshire or western Pennsylvania regions in schools that embraced even the modest "Progressive" impulses that have periodically predominated at Wheelock and Falk.[17] This caused both faculty and students to question the professional legitimacy and practicality of observation, and especially student teaching, in the lab school. In 1945, for

example, Pittsburgh's Dean of Education S.P. Franklin wrote that the Falk lab school, with its small classes and "progressive and informal philosophy," was "just too unlike the public school to train teachers for the public schools."[18] This sentiment has appeared regularly over the years regarding lab schools across the country.[19]

This, of course, raises a fundamental question about the means and ends of teacher education. Is the highest priority to orient teacher candidates to the realities of "typical" schools (if we can determine what those are), or to advocate for particular philosophies and desired practices in schooling? And where does this leave the lab school? If it aggressively pursues ever-better practices, it risks losing its legitimacy in its own teacher education program. If, alternatively, it keeps "progressive" tendencies in check so that it remains close to the public school norm, it may gain in legitimacy but become redundant, and thus no longer cost effective, in the ed school program.

Lab Schools "Outside the Loop" of Ed School Program Decisions. Both the Falk and the Wheelock lab schools evolved in a tangential relationship to their respective college teacher education programs, rather than as a focal point of planning about how to train teachers and to impact upon schooling in their respective regions. Other than the issue of program size already noted, this occurred for two reasons.

The first was that neither Pittsburgh's School of Education

nor Keene State College developed any coherent master plan of how it wanted to influence the schooling of children, except for some aspects of Keene's first twenty-five years (1909-1934)[20] and two brief periods at Pittsburgh, 1931-1936[21] and 1969-1976.[22] Pittsburgh mounted in-service graduate and non-degree programs for teachers and administrators from the first decade of this century; Keene began largely after World War II. At neither college did the lab school play any documented role in either the planning or the execution of such programs. This had two negative effects: it compromised the lab schools' ability to carry out its "modelling" function of exemplary programs to local districts, and it kept the lab school faculty and its teacher candidates isolated from dialogue with the graduate students -- their soon-to-be employers and colleagues -- about how children should be taught.

The second factor which kept Falk and Wheelock on the fringe of ed school operations was the marginality of their faculty members' status on the campus. The details varied somewhat between the two colleges, but the overall picture was similar. At Keene State College, the Wheelock Lab School faculty have been listed in the college catalogue as faculty members, holding either Instructor or Assistant Professor appointments, throughout the college's history. But interviews with faculty who taught at Wheelock since the 1950s revealed that, while relations between campus and lab school have been cordial and cooperative, and lab school faculty have served on hiring committees for Education

professor appointments, they have not been invited to sit on college curriculum committees or the college faculty senate, nor have they typically taught college courses in the Education or other departments. At Pittsburgh, the Falk Lab School faculty have not generally held regular faculty appointments at the university, though they did at one time, and only recently have a few become candidates for co-investigator or grantee in a School of Education research activity. Periodically, some Falk faculty have taught sections of courses at the university. Furthermore, regarding Falk's notion in the 1970s that candidates for Education professorships could use the lab school to demonstrate their teaching skills, there is no evidence that any such thing occurred at Keene in recent decades or at Pittsburgh at any time.

Marginal faculty status, in short, has kept the lab school staff on the fringes of whatever substantive discussions occurred among their on-campus colleagues, from the design and implementation of programs to the choices about what questions merited research. This has significantly limited the lab schools' ability to carry out the range of functions which some have sought.

The Lab School and Research. Until very recent years, teacher education nationally has suffered from a three-pronged conspiracy to keep potentially valuable new knowledge about teaching and learning away from teacher candidates and cooperating school districts. At the same time, lab schools have remained largely out of the business of conducting or assessing

research -- in short, there has been little or nothing lab-like about lab schools.[23]

The three prongs are as follows. First, Education faculties at baccalaureate institutions, especially ex-normal schools, have traditionally conducted neither original research nor formal reviews or assessments of current work in the field. Keene State College's Education department met this description until the 1980s. Second, Education faculties at graduate institutions have traditionally carried on grant-seeking, the design of research, and its execution, either on topics remote from regular elementary and secondary classrooms, or by ducking in and out of lab or other schools to grab a few research subjects, collect their data, and leave. The University of Pittsburgh's School of Education, and the L.R.D.C., have met this description in most instances during the period of this study. Third, the field component of teacher education has rarely convened seminars of professors, practitioners, and teacher candidates to discuss which new or old ideas about teaching are worth preserving, discarding, or reassessing. This has characterized both institutions throughout the period of this study. In short, research at schools and colleges of education has often either not existed, been irrelevant or at best tangential to the concerns of classroom teachers, and/or been ignored in the field component of teacher education.[24]

Periods of the Falk School's history at Pittsburgh have provided interesting exceptions to this state of affairs. For

example, under Director Harry Sartain (1960-1974), Falk collaborated with Dr. Benjamin Spock and other members of the university's medical and psychology faculties to develop the notion of the case-study conference in a school setting. Although it is not known whether this model, as applied to schools, originated at Pittsburgh, it is now common, and in many states legislatively mandated, that Individual Educational Plan conferences convene regularly for children receiving special education services. Sartain also brought his own research on reading to the lab school, in collaboration with professors based at the university.[25] Less successful were efforts by the university's L.R.D.C. to research and develop modules of "programmed instruction" in the 1960s. Falk and School of Education faculty resistance to what they viewed as the L.R.D.C.'s single-minded commitment to a teacher-proof curriculum eventually resulted in the L.R.D.C. leaving Falk and creating its own lab setting,[26] and in time moving on to other research areas that have proven more constructive.

Conclusions and Recommendations. John Goodlad has argued that the lab school will never play a meaningful role in bringing new knowledge to bear on practice -- and I would add, practitioners to bear on researchers -- until the job of lab school teacher is restructured to reflect some of the multiple roles of the school. While stating that career researchers and superb grade-school teachers are not and should not become interchangeable parts of the ed school, he nonetheless offers a

scenario, including differentiated daily responsibilities for the teacher, in which research could finally become an important component of the lab school.[27] His recommendations would help significantly to create both a professional culture and a wider set of opportunities that would promote an alliance of research and practice in the lab school. Such structural changes would also promote a new collegiality between lab and campus faculty, and a modification or end to the marginality of the lab school teacher's status in the college.

Regarding the teacher education function of the lab school -- both for pre-service teachers and in modelling and evaluating "best practices" for in-service teachers and administrators -- a larger-scale restructuring of degree programs will be required. Pittsburgh's Elementary Education department from 1969-1976, under Chairman Horton Southworth, implemented just such a restructured program with great success and without great expense. Although time does not permit a full explication here, the program transformed the classroom instruction and field work for all elementary candidates by creating a network of college/grade-school collaborations called Teacher Centers.[28]

The Falk lab school served as one important anchor of the network, and as an equal partner with several other schools and school districts which joined the collaborative. This was an impressive example of what are today being called "professional development schools" for simultaneous pre- and in-service training. Although Falk faculty members remained active as

consultants and workshop leaders for neighboring schools after the demise of the Teacher Centers, Goodlad has argued convincingly that offering workshops here and there is a much less effective change strategy than serving as a lighthouse school for a network of participating districts that are already committed to school reform and have implemented structures, such as the Teacher Centers, to achieve and nurture reform.[29]

The evidence suggests that lab schools have been in decline for several decades. A 1964 survey cited 186 responding schools,[30] while a late 1980s survey documented approximately 100 survivors. Historians of education who wonder why they haven't heard of much work from lab schools since the days of John Dewey may now understand that the "lab" has long since gone out of the "lab school." But a genuine alliance of grade school and ed school is precisely what the doctor is ordering in the new wave of school and teacher education reform. This unfulfilled alliance still holds great potential, especially if incorporated into a renewed teacher education program such as the one carried on for seven years (1969-1976) at Pittsburgh. The legacy of John Dewey may yet return to the schools first inspired by his work at the University of Chicago nearly 100 years ago.

NOTES

1. Robert A. Levin, "Preparing Elementary Teachers: The University of Pittsburgh and Keene State College in Historical Perspective" (D.A. diss., Carnegie-Mellon University, Department of History, 1990).

2. The larger study also addressed related social and historical issues in the evolution of programs for elementary teacher candidates at Pittsburgh and Keene. In particular those issues included: the interplay of competing branches of Progressive educational thought; watershed events in twentieth century American history which impacted upon the nation's priorities for schooling and teacher education; and the differential role of gender in the founding and growth of Education programs at the two institutions.

3. "Unique Functions of a Campus Laboratory School." Internal document, Fanny Edel Falk Lab School, School of Education, University of Pittsburgh, undated but filed with documents from 1972. (Files of Dr. Harry Sartain, Director of the Falk School from 1960-1974, now Professor of Elementary Education, School of Education, University of Pittsburgh.)

The author wishes gratefully to acknowledge Dr. Sartain's help in providing background and materials that contributed to this research, as well as that of the following other University of Pittsburgh faculty members: Dr. Roy Creek, Director of the Falk School, 1974-Present; Dr. Horton Southworth, Professor of Elementary Education, 1967-Present; and Dr. Richard Seckinger, Professor of Educational Foundations, 1960-Present. Thanks also to Dr. Leslie Salmon-Cox of the Learning, Research and Development Center, University of Pittsburgh, for some of the historical material on the relationship between the L.R.D.C. and the Falk School.

Particular thanks to Professors Southworth and Seckinger who, along with others involved in past Education programs at the University, read and commented upon drafts of the larger study upon which the current paper is based.

4. Survey: Falk Elementary School, School of Education, University of Pittsburgh. Made by the Professional Staff of the School of Education, University of Pittsburgh, under the direction of Maurice J. Thomas, Professor of Education (Pittsburgh: School of Education, University of Pittsburgh, February 1957), 157;
School of Education Bulletin, University of Pittsburgh, 1973-1974 (Hillman Library, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh), 45-46; and
Personal interview, Harry Sartain, 15 November 1989,

Pittsburgh.

5. The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of several members of the Keene State College faculty in this research: David Costin, Wheelock faculty member, 1957-1966, Supervisor and then Director of Student Teaching for the College, 1967-Present; Jane Bennett, Wheelock faculty 1939-1944 and 1958-1983; Shirley Heise, Wheelock faculty, 1954-1987; Ann Ayotte, Wheelock faculty, 1969-Present; Carole Plaisted, Wheelock faculty, 1962-Present; Ray Jobin, Wheelock faculty, 1966-Present; Dan Gillard, Wheelock faculty, 1980-Present, and Acting Principal, 1989-1990; George Bergeron, Wheelock principal, 1957-1989; Delina Hickey, Education faculty since 1975 and Acting Dean of Professional Studies, 1987-1989; and James D. Smart, History faculty, 1966-Present, and author of the College's official history, Striving (1984).

Particular thanks to Professors Plaisted and Smart, who read and commented upon drafts of the larger study upon which the current paper is based.

6. R.A. Levin, "Preparing Elementary Teachers."

7. See, for example:

John I. Goodlad, Roger Soder, and Kenneth A. Sirotnik, eds., Places Where Teachers Are Taught (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990), especially Chapter 1 (by Goodlad) and Chapter 2 (by R.A. Levin), which consider the historical evolution of teacher training at twenty-nine colleges and universities, and

John I. Goodlad, Teachers for Our Nation's Schools, the final report of the Study of the Education of Educators, Center for Educational Renewal, University of Washington, Seattle (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990).

8. A term made popular during the 1988 Congressional "Iran-Contra" hearings by those subjects claiming to have been excluded from high-level discussions of legally- and ethically-questionable behavior.

9. John Bolvin and Leslie Salmon-Cox, "L.R.D.C. and the School of Education." Paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, March 1982 (files of the L.R.D.C./L. Salmon-Cox);

Personal interview, Leslie Salmon-Cox, 15 November 1989, Pittsburgh;

Personal interview, Harry Sartain, 13 and 15 November 1989, Pittsburgh;

Personal interview, Roy J. Creek, 14 November 1989, Pittsburgh.

10. "A Report to the Commissions on Institutions of Higher Education in the Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges." School of Education, University of Pittsburgh, November 1960. (Files of Dr. Richard Seckinger, Professor of

Education, University of Pittsburgh.)

11. R.A. Levin, "Preparing Elementary Teachers," Chapter 4.

12. Roberta L. Schomburg, "The Laboratory School as a Function of Higher Education: A Historical Analysis of the Falk Elementary School." A paper written for the History of Higher Education course, School of Education, University of Pittsburgh, Fall 1975, p. 7. (Files of Dr. Richard Seckinger, Professor of Education.) and
School of Education Bulletin, 1973-1974, 45-46.

13. R.A. Levin, "Preparing Elementary Teachers," Chapters 5-7.

14. R.A. Levin, "Preparing Elementary Teachers," 161-164.

15. R.A. Levin, "Preparing Elementary Teachers," 126-127.

16. See notes 12 and 13.

17. Interview with Harry Sartain, 15 November 1989; Interview with David Costin, 10 October 1989 in Keene; and documentary sources cited in R.A. Levin, "Preparing Elementary Teachers."

18. Annual Report to Chancellor Bowman on the School of Education, University of Pittsburgh, 1944-1945 (University Archives, Hillman Library, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh).

19. William Van Til, "The Laboratory School: Its Rise and Fall?" (Terre Haute, Indiana: Indiana State University and Laboratory Schools Administrators Association, 1969), and
John I. Goodlad, "How Laboratory Schools Go Awry." U.C.L.A. Educator, Vol. 21, No. 2, Winter 1980, 46-53.

20. R.A. Levin, "Preparing Elementary Teachers," Chapters 5 and 6.

21. R.A. Levin, "Preparing Elementary Teachers," Chapter 3.

22. R.A. Levin, "Preparing Elementary Teachers," Chapter 4.

23. A recent membership directory of the National Association of Laboratory Schools published the responses of its approximately 100 members schools to a request that they quantify the priorities assigned to various school functions. By an overwhelming majority, member schools either did not list research at all, or rated it at about 5 percent of the school's activities.

24. See, for example:
John I. Goodlad, "Connecting the Present to the Past." In J.I. Goodlad, R. Soder, and K.A. Sirotnik, eds., Places Where

Teachers Are Taught, 23-34, and
R.A. Levin, "Preparing Elementary Teachers," sections in each chapter on the relationship of Education faculty and their work to the teacher education curriculum and its clinical components at Keene and Pittsburgh.

25. Annual Report, Falk Laboratory School Services, 1972-1973 (School of Education, University of Pittsburgh, internal document from Dr. Sartain's files, May 1973), 3-4.

26. Interviews with Harry Sartain, 13 and 15 November 1989, Roy Creek, 14 November 1989, Horton C. Southworth, 15 November 1989, and Leslie Salmon-Cox, 15 November 1989, in Pittsburgh.

27. J.I. Goodlad, "How Laboratory Schools Go Awry," 51-53.

28. Southworth's "Teacher Centers" -- collaborative training sites for pre- and in-service teachers -- should not be confused with the way the same term was used in many school districts since the mid-1970s, to refer to resource centers in which teachers could come after school to design and produce instructional materials.

29. J.I. Goodlad, "How Lab Schools Go Awry," 48.

30. James Hugh Kelley, College-Controlled Laboratory Schools in the United States -- 1964 (Washington, D.C.: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1964), cited in W. Van Til, "The Laboratory School: Its Rise and Fall?" p. 10.